Tuesday, October 24

Mark 8:34-9:1

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.” –NRSV

Wednesday, October 25

Mark 9:2-8

After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. –NIV

Thursday, October 26

Mark 9:9-13

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what "rising from the dead" meant.

And they asked him, "Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?"

Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him." –NIV

Friday, October 27

Mark 9:14-29

When they came back down the mountain to the other disciples, they saw a huge crowd around them, and the religion scholars cross-examining them. As soon as the people in the crowd saw Jesus, admiring excitement stirred them. They ran and greeted him. He asked, "What's going on? What's all the commotion?"

A man out of the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought my mute son, made speechless by a demon, to you. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and goes stiff as a board. I told your disciples, hoping they could deliver him, but they couldn't."

Jesus said, "What a generation! No sense of God! How many times do I have to go over these things? How much longer do I have to put up with this? Bring the boy here." They brought him. When the demon saw Jesus, it threw the boy into a seizure, causing him to writhe on the ground and foam at the mouth.

He asked the boy's father, "How long has this been going on?"

"Ever since he was a little boy. Many times it pitches him into fire or the river to do away with him. If you can do anything, do it. Have a heart and help us!"

Jesus said, "If? There are no 'ifs' among believers. Anything can happen."

No sooner were the words out of his mouth than the father cried, "Then I believe. Help me with my doubts!"

Seeing that the crowd was forming fast, Jesus gave the vile spirit its marching orders: "Dumb and deaf spirit, I command you—Out of him, and stay out!" Screaming, and with much thrashing about, it left. The boy was pale as a corpse, so people started saying, "He's dead." But Jesus, taking his hand, raised him. The boy stood up.

After arriving back home, his disciples cornered Jesus and asked, "Why couldn't we throw the demon out?"

He answered, "There is no way to get rid of this kind of demon except by prayer." – The Message

Saturday, October 28

Hebrews 6:13-7:14

When God made his promise to Abraham, he backed it to the hilt, putting his own reputation on the line. He said, "I promise that I'll bless you with everything I have—bless and bless and bless!" Abraham stuck it out and got everything that had been promised to him. When people make promises, they guarantee them by appeal to some authority above them so that if there is any question that they'll make good on the promise, the authority will back them up. When God wanted to guarantee his promises, he gave his word, a rock-solid guarantee—God can't break his word. And because his word cannot change, the promise is likewise unchangeable.

We who have run for our very lives to God have every reason to grab the promised hope with both hands and never let go. It's an unbreakable spiritual lifeline, reaching past all appearances right to the very presence of God where Jesus, running on ahead of us, has taken up his permanent post as high priest for us, in the order of Melchizedek.

Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of the Highest God. He met Abraham, who was returning from "the royal massacre," and gave him his blessing. Abraham in turn gave him a tenth of the spoils. "Melchizedek" means "King of Righteousness." "Salem" means "Peace." So, he is also "King of Peace." Melchizedek towers out of the past—without record of family ties, no account of beginning or end. In this way he is like the Son of God, one huge priestly presence dominating the landscape always.

You realize just how great Melchizedek is when you see that Father Abraham gave him a tenth of the captured treasure. Priests descended from Levi are commanded by law to collect tithes from the people, even though they are all more or less equals, priests and people, having a common father in Abraham. But this man, a complete outsider, collected tithes from Abraham and blessed him, the one to whom the promises had been given. In acts of blessing, the lesser is blessed by the greater.

Or look at it this way: We pay our tithes to priests who die, but Abraham paid tithes to a priest who, the Scripture says, "lives." Ultimately you could even say that since Levi descended from Abraham, who paid tithes to Melchizedek, when we pay tithes to the priestly tribe of Levi they end up with Melchizedek.

If the priesthood of Levi and Aaron, which provided the framework for the giving of the law, could really make people perfect, there wouldn't have been need for a new priesthood like that of Melchizedek. But since it didn't get the job done, there was a change of priesthood, which brought with it a radical new kind of law. There is no way of understanding this in terms of the old Levitical priesthood, which is why there is nothing in Jesus' family tree connecting him with that priestly line. – The Message

Sunday, October 29

Opening Prayer:
Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP 235)

Hebrews 7:15-28

It is even more obvious when another priest arises, resembling Melchizedek, one who has become a priest, not through a legal requirement concerning physical descent, but through the power of an indestructible life. For it is attested of him,

"You are a priest forever,
according to the order of
Melchizedek."

There is, on the one hand, the abrogation of an earlier commandment because it was weak and ineffectual (for the law made nothing perfect); there is, on the other hand, the introduction of a better hope, through which we approach God.

This was confirmed with an oath; for others who became priests took their office without an oath, but this one became a priest with an oath, because of the one who said to him,

"The Lord has sworn
and will not change his mind,
'You are a priest forever'"—

accordingly Jesus has also become the guarantee of a better covenant.

Furthermore, the former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever. –NSRV

Monday, October 30

Mark 9:30-37

And they went forth from thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it. For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered up into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he shall rise again. But they understood not the saying, and were afraid to ask him. And they came to Capernaum: and when he was in the house he asked them, What were ye reasoning on the way? But they held their peace: for they had disputed one with another on the way, who was the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve; and he saith unto them, If any man would be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a little child, and set him in the midst of them: and taking him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such little children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me. –(ASV) American Standard Version

Tuesday, October 31

Mark 9:38-50

And John answered him saying, Teacher, we saw some one casting out demons in thy name, who does not follow us, and we forbad him, because he does not follow us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not; for there is no one who shall do a miracle in my name, and be able soon [after] to speak ill of me; for he who is not against us is for us. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in [my] name, because ye are Christ's, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward. And whosoever shall be a snare to one of the little ones who believe [in me], it were better for him if a millstone were hung about his neck, and he cast into the sea. And if thy hand serve as a snare to thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having thy two hands to go away into hell, into the fire unquenchable; [where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched]. And if thy foot serve as a snare to thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life lame, than having thy two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire unquenchable; [where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched]. And if thine eye serve as a snare to thee, cast it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire, where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt [is] good, but if the salt is become saltless, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another. –DARBY

Wednesday, November 1
The Feast of All Saints

Opening Prayer:

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: Give us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those ineffable joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen*. (BCP 245)

Isaiah 25:6-9 and/or Revelation 21:1-6a

[connections between previous discussion of Mark 9:42-50? Or that passage for today?]

Isaiah 25:6-9

On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken. In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation." –(NIV) New International Version

Revelation 21:1-6a

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. –(NIV) New International Version

Christ's kingdom above is greater than his kingdom below. When a good man dies and goes away to be here no more, he does not go into a land of strangers; all who have lived, felt like him, and died like him are in the upper world ready to welcome him to the Christian's only true home. All who have any true worth of character are there….

All that is good is in heaven. All that is glorious is there. All that is permanent is there. No change comes there—no sickness—no death—no grief—no wasting remorse---no bitter memory—no secret sting—no disturbing jealousy—no envy of the soul, pining away because another is great or beloved. Happiness, like a broad, smiling sky, overspreads and surrounds all the inhabitants of the upper clime. No trumpet of war breaks in upon the groves of eternal rest…No broken vows and broken hearts are there. No tombstones there to tell the sad tale of mortality and tears. No fields of war are there scathed with the breath of the red artillery, making desolation more desolate.
—William Apess

Thursday, November 2

Mark 10:1-12

Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them. Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" "What did Moses command you?" he replied. They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery." –(NIV) New International Version

Friday, November 3

Mark 10:1-12

See above—I think this is a mistake.

Saturday, November 4

Hebrews 8:1-13

In essence, we have just such a high priest: authoritative right alongside God, conducting worship in the one true sanctuary built by God. The assigned task of a high priest is to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and it's no different with the priesthood of Jesus. If he were limited to earth, he wouldn't even be a priest. We wouldn't need him since there are plenty of priests who offer the gifts designated in the law. These priests provide only a hint of what goes on in the true sanctuary of heaven, which Moses caught a glimpse of as he was about to set up the tent-shrine. It was then that God said, "Be careful to do it exactly as you saw it on the Mountain."

But Jesus' priestly work far surpasses what these other priests do, since he's working from a far better plan. If the first plan—the old covenant—had worked out, a second wouldn't have been needed. But we know the first was found wanting, because God said, Heads up! The days are coming when I'll set up a new plan for dealing with Israel and Judah. I'll throw out the old plan I set up with their ancestors when I led them by the hand out of Egypt. They didn't keep their part of the bargain, so I looked away and let it go. This new plan I'm making with Israel isn't going to be written on paper, isn't going to be chiseled in stone; This time I'm writing out the plan in them, carving it on the lining of their hearts. I'll be their God, they'll be my people. They won't go to school to learn about me, or buy a book called God in Five Easy Lessons. They'll all get to know me firsthand, the little and the big, the small and the

great. They'll get to know me by being kindly forgiven, with the slate of their sins forever wiped clean. By coming up with a new plan, a new covenant between God and his people, God put the old plan on the shelf. And there it stays, gathering dust. –(TMSG) The Message

Sunday, November 5

Opening Prayer:
Almighty and merciful God, it is only by your gift that your faithful people offer you true and laudable service: Grant that we may run without stumbling to obtain your heavenly promises; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen*. (BCP 235)

Hebrews 9:1-14
The first therefore also indeed had ordinances of service, and the sanctuary, a worldly one. For a tabernacle was set up; the first, in which [were] both the candlestick and the table and the exposition of the loaves, which is called Holy; but after the second veil a tabernacle which is called Holy of holies, having a golden censer, and the ark of the covenant, covered round in every part with gold, in which [were] the golden pot that had the manna, and the rod of Aaron that had sprouted, and the tables of the covenant; and above over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat; concerning which it is not now [the time] to speak in detail. Now these things being thus ordered, into the first tabernacle the priests enter at all times, accomplishing the services; but into the second, the high priest only, once a year, not without blood, which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people: the Holy Spirit shewing this, that the way of the [holy of] holies has not yet been made manifest while as yet the first tabernacle has [its] standing; the which [is] an image for the present time, according to which both gifts and sacrifices, unable to perfect as to conscience him that worshipped, are offered, [consisting] only of meats and drinks and divers washings, ordinances of flesh, imposed until [the] time of setting things right. But Christ being come high priest of the good things to come, by the better and more perfect tabernacle not made with hand, (that is, not of this creation,) nor by blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, has entered in once for all into the [holy of] holies, having found an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and a heifer's ashes sprinkling the defiled, sanctifies for the purity of the flesh, how much rather shall the blood of the Christ, who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God, purify your conscience from dead works to worship [the] living God? –DARBY

Monday, November 6

Mark 10:13-22
And they kept bringing young children to Him that He might touch them, and the disciples were reproving them [for it]. But when Jesus saw [it], He was indignant and pained and said to them, Allow the children to come to Me--do not forbid or prevent or hinder them--for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive and accept and welcome the kingdom of God like a little child [does] positively shall not enter it at all. And He took them [the children up one by one] in His arms and [fervently invoked a] blessing, placing His hands upon them. And as He was setting out on His journey, a man ran up and knelt before Him and asked Him, Teacher, [You are essentially and perfectly morally] good, what must I do to inherit eternal life [that is, to partake of eternal salvation in the Messiah's kingdom]? And Jesus said to him, Why do you call Me [essentially and perfectly morally] good? There is no one [essentially and perfectly morally] good--except God alone. You know the commandments: Do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not defraud, honor your father and mother. And he replied to Him, Teacher, I have carefully guarded and observed all these and taken care not to violate them from my boyhood. And Jesus, looking upon him, loved him, and He said to him, You lack one thing; go and sell all you have and give [the money] to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come [and] accompany Me [walking the same road that I walk]. At that saying the man's countenance fell and was gloomy, and he went away grieved and sorrowing, for he was holding great possessions. –(AMP) The Amplified Bible

Tuesday, November 7

Mark 10:23-31

Jesus looked around Him. He said to His followers, "How hard it is for rich people to get into the holy nation of God!" The followers were surprised and wondered about His words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children! How hard it is for those who put their trust in riches to get into the holy nation of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to go to heaven." They were very surprised and wondered, saying to themselves, "Then who can be saved from the punishment of sin?" Jesus looked at them and said, "This cannot be done by men but God can do anything." Then Peter began to say to Him, "We have given up everything we had and have followed You." Jesus said, "For sure, I tell you, there are those who have given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands because of Me, and the Good News. They will get back one hundred times as much now at this time in houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands. Along with this, they will have very much trouble. And they will have life that lasts forever in the world to come. Many who are first will be last. Many who are last will be first." –(NLV) New Living Version

Wednesday, November 8

Mark 10:32-45

Back on the road, they set out for Jerusalem. Jesus had a head start on them, and they were following, puzzled and not just a little afraid. He took the Twelve and began again to go over what to expect next. "Listen to me carefully. We're on our way up to Jerusalem. When we get there, the Son of Man will be betrayed to the religious leaders and scholars. They will sentence him to death. Then they will hand him over to the Romans, who will mock and spit on him, give him the third degree, and kill him. After three days he will rise alive." James and John, Zebedee's sons, came up to him. "Teacher, we have something we want you to do for us." "What is it? I'll see what I can do." "Arrange it," they said, "so that we will be awarded the highest places of honor in your glory—one of us at your right, the other at your left." Jesus said, "You have no idea what you're asking. Are you capable of drinking the cup I drink, of being baptized in the baptism I'm about to be plunged into?" "Sure," they said. "Why not?" Jesus said, "Come to think of it, you will drink the cup I drink, and be baptized in my baptism. But as to awarding places of honor, that's not my business. There are other arrangements for that." When the other ten heard of this conversation, they lost their tempers with James and John. Jesus got them together to settle things down. "You've observed how godless rulers throw their weight around," he said, "and when people get a little power how quickly it goes to their heads. It's not going to be that way with you. Whoever wants to be great must become a servant. Whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave. That is what the Son of Man has done: He came to serve, not to be served—and then to give away his life in exchange for many who are held hostage." –(TMSG) The Message

(with another quote, probably—as a conclusion or introduction to the day's entry)
Heaven will be too narrow a space to sing the praises of redeeming love, and even an unending eternity not long enough to celebrate the dying love of the second person in the Godhead.
—William Apess

Thursday, November 9

Mark 10:46-52

They spent some time in Jericho. As Jesus was leaving town, trailed by his disciples and a parade of people, a blind beggar by the name of Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus, was sitting alongside the road. When he heard that Jesus the Nazarene was passing by, he began to cry out, "Son of David, Jesus! Mercy, have mercy on me!" Many tried to

hush him up, but he yelled all the louder, "Son of David! Mercy, have mercy on me!" Jesus stopped in his tracks. "Call him over." They called him. "It's your lucky day! Get up! He's calling you to come!" Throwing off his coat, he was on his feet at once and came to Jesus. Jesus said, "What can I do for you?" The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see." "On your way," said Jesus. "Your faith has saved and healed you." In that very instant he recovered his sight and followed Jesus down the road. –(TMSG) The Message

Friday, November 10

Mark 11:1-11

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.' " They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest!" Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve. –(NIV) New International Version

Saturday, November 11

Hebrebrews 9:15-28

And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it. For a testament is of force where there hath been death: for it doth never avail while he that made it liveth. Wherefore even the first covenant hath not been dedicated without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses unto all the people according to the law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded to you-ward. Moreover the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry he sprinkled in like manner with the blood. And according to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission. It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place year by year with blood not his own; else must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment; so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation.—(ASV) American Standard Version

Sunday, November 12

<u>Opening Prayer:</u>

O God, whose blessed Son came in to the world that he might destroy the works of the devil and make us children of God and heirs of eternal life: Grant that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves as he is pure; that, when he

comes again with power and great glory, we may be made like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom; where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen*. (BCP 236)

Hebrews 10:1-10

For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things, can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh. Else would they not have ceased to be offered? because the worshippers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sins year by year. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, But a body didst thou prepare for me; In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure: Then said I, Lo, I am come (In the roll of the book it is written of me) To do thy will, O God. Saying above, Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein (the which are offered according to the law), then hath he said, Lo, I am come to do thy will. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. –(ASV) American Standard Version

Monday, November 13

Mark 11:12-21

As they left Bethany the next day, he was hungry. Off in the distance he saw a fig tree in full leaf. He came up to it expecting to find something for breakfast, but found nothing but fig leaves. (It wasn't yet the season for figs.) He addressed the tree: "No one is going to eat fruit from you again—ever!" And his disciples overheard him.

They arrived at Jerusalem. Immediately on entering the Temple Jesus started throwing out everyone who had set up shop there, buying and selling. He kicked over the tables of the bankers and the stalls of the pigeon merchants. He didn't let anyone even carry a basket through the Temple. And then he taught them, quoting this text:

My house was designated a house of prayer for the nations;
You've turned it into a hangout for thieves.

The high priests and religion scholars heard what was going on and plotted how they might get rid of him. They panicked, for the entire crowd was carried away by his teaching.

At evening, Jesus and his disciples left the city.

In the morning, walking along the road, they saw the fig tree, shriveled to a dry stick. Peter, remembering what had happened the previous day, said to him, "Rabbi, look—the fig tree you cursed is shriveled up!" --(The Message)

Tuesday, November 14

Mark 11:20-25
(this overlap is intentional—highlights the fig tree/temple cleansing connections in 11:12-21 while enabling focus on faith/prayer lessons of 11:20-25)

In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered! "Have faith in God," Jesus answered. "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."—(NIV) New International Version

It is the duty of Christians more and more to pray, "Thy kingdom come;" for every great spiritual good, God will be inquired of by the house of Israel. No great blessing and extension can come to the cause of godliness before much

earnest prayer has bee made by those whose duty it is to be co-workers together with God in the salvation of a ruined world. Unless Christians pray with earnest agony of desire for the increase of Christ's kingdom, they will feel no gladness when the event has come in its full glory. Praise only can spring from a deep and living interest in the cause. The hymns and anthems of loud joy will only be in the mouths of those who have prayed for the blessed event, with sincerity and perseverance.
—William Apess

Wednesday, November 15

Mark 11:27-33

They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you authority to do this?" Jesus replied, "I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John's baptism—was it from heaven, or from men? Tell me!" They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' But if we say, 'From men'...." (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.) So they answered Jesus, "We don't know." Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."—(NIV) New International Version

Thursday, November 16

Mark 12:1-12

And he began to say to them in parables, A man planted a vineyard, and made a fence round [it] and dug a wine-vat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and left the country. And he sent a bondman to the husbandmen at the season, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. But they took him, and beat [him], and sent [him] away empty. And again he sent to them another bondman; and [at] him they [threw stones, and] struck [him] on the head, and sent [him] away with insult. And [again] he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. Having yet therefore one beloved son, he sent also him to them the last, saying, They will have respect for my son. But those husbandmen said to one another, This is the heir: come, let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours. And they took him and killed him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard to others. Have ye not even read this scripture, The stone which they that builded rejected, this has become the corner-stone: this is of [the] Lord, and it is wonderful in our eyes? And they sought to lay hold of him, and they feared the crowd; for they knew that he had spoken the parable of them. And they left him and went away. —DARBY

Friday, November 17

Mark 12:13-17

Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn't we?"

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?" he asked. "Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?"

"Caesar's," they replied. Then Jesus said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." And they were amazed at him. –(NIV)

Saturday, November 18

Hebrews 10:11-25

Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. –(NIV) New International Version

Sunday, November 19

<u>Opening Prayer:</u>

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen*. (BCP 236)

Hebrews 10:26-39

If we give up and turn our backs on all we've learned, all we've been given, all the truth we now know, we repudiate Christ's sacrifice and are left on our own to face the Judgment—and a mighty fierce judgment it will be! If the penalty for breaking the law of Moses is physical death, what do you think will happen if you turn on God's Son, spit on the sacrifice that made you whole, and insult this most gracious Spirit? This is no light matter. God has warned us that he'll hold us to account and make us pay. He was quite explicit: "Vengeance is mine, and I won't overlook a thing" and "God will judge his people." Nobody's getting by with anything, believe me.

Remember those early days after you first saw the light? Those were the hard times! Kicked around in public, targets of every kind of abuse—some days it was you, other days your friends. If some friends went to prison, you stuck by them. If some enemies broke in and seized your goods, you let them go with a smile, knowing they couldn't touch your real treasure. Nothing they did bothered you, nothing set you back. So don't throw it all away now. You were sure of yourselves then. It's still a sure thing! But you need to stick it out, staying with God's plan so you'll be there for the promised completion.

It won't be long now, he's on the way;
he'll show up most any minute.
But anyone who is right with me thrives on loyal trust;
if he cuts and runs, I won't be very happy.

But we're not quitters who lose out. Oh, no! We'll stay with it and survive, trusting all the way.
–(The Message)

Monday, November 20

Mark 12:18-27

Some Sadducees, the party that denies any possibility of resurrection, came up and asked, "Teacher, Moses wrote that if a man dies and leaves a wife but no child, his brother is obligated to marry the widow and have children. Well, there once were seven brothers. The first took a wife. He died childless. The second married her. He died, and still no child. The same with the third. All seven took their turn, but no child. Finally the wife died. When they are raised at the resurrection, whose wife is she? All seven were her husband."

Jesus said, "You're way off base, and here's why: One, you don't know your Bibles; two, you don't know how God works. After the dead are raised up, we're past the marriage business. As it is with angels now, all our ecstasies and intimacies then will be with God. And regarding the dead, whether or not they are raised, don't you ever read the Bible? How God at the bush said to Moses, 'I am—not was—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? The living God is God of the living, not the dead. You're way, way off base." –(TMSG) The Message

Tuesday, November 21

Mark 12:28-34

One of the religion scholars came up. Hearing the lively exchanges of question and answer and seeing how sharp Jesus was in his answers, he put in his question: "Which is most important of all the commandments?"

Jesus said, "The first in importance is, 'Listen, Israel: The Lord your God is one; so love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy.' And here is the second: 'Love others as well as you love yourself.' There is no other commandment that ranks with these."

The religion scholar said, "A wonderful answer, Teacher! So lucid and accurate—that God is one and there is no other. And loving him with all passion and intelligence and energy, and loving others as well as you love yourself. Why, that's better than all offerings and sacrifices put together!"

When Jesus realized how insightful he was, he said, "You're almost there, right on the border of God's kingdom."

After that, no one else dared ask a question. —(TMSG) The Message

Wednesday, November 22

Psalm 110

The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies. Your troops will be willing on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy majesty, from the womb of the dawn you will receive the dew of your youth. The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." The Lord is at your right hand; he will crush kings on the day of his wrath. He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead and crushing the rulers of the whole earth. He will drink from a brook beside the way; therefore he will lift up his head. –(NIV) New International Version

Mark 12:35-37

While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, "How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: "The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.'" David himself calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?"

The large crowd listened to him with delight. –(NIV) New International Version

Thursday, November 23

Mark 12:38-40

As he taught, Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely." –(NIV) New International Version

Friday, November 24

Mark 12:41-44

And He sat down opposite the treasury and saw how the crowd was casting money into the treasury. Many rich [people] were throwing in large sums. And a widow who was poverty-stricken came and put in two copper mites [the smallest of coins], which together make half of a cent. And He called His disciples [to Him] and said to them, Truly and surely I tell you, this widow, [she who is] poverty-stricken, has put in more than all those contributing to the treasury. For they all threw in out of their abundance; but she, out of her deep poverty, has put in everything that she had--[even] all she had on which to live. –(AMP) Amplified Bible

Saturday, November 25

Hebrews 11:1-16

Now faith is [the] substantiating of things hoped for, [the] conviction of things not seen. For in [the power of] this the elders have obtained testimony. By faith we apprehend that the worlds were framed by [the] word of God, so that that which is seen should not take its origin from things which appear. By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained testimony of being righteous, God bearing testimony to his gifts, and by it, having died, he yet speaks. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before [his] translation he has the testimony that he had pleased God. But without faith [it is] impossible to please [him]. For he that draws near to God must believe that he is, and [that] he is a rewarder of them who seek him out. By faith, Noah, oracularly warned concerning things not yet seen, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which [is] according to faith. By faith Abraham, being called, obeyed to go out into the place which he was to receive for an inheritance, and went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he sojourned as a stranger in the land of promise as a foreign country, having dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with [him] of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, of which God is [the] artificer and constructor. By faith also Sarah herself received strength for [the] conception of seed, and [that] beyond a seasonable age; since she counted him faithful who promised. Wherefore also there have been born of one, and that of one become dead, even as the stars of heaven in multitude, and as the countless sand which [is] by the sea shore. All these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them from afar off and embraced [them], and confessed that they were strangers and sojourners on the earth. For they who say such things shew clearly that they seek [their] country. And if they had called to mind that from whence they went out, they had had opportunity to have returned; but now they seek a better, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he has prepared for them a city. –DARBY

Sunday, November 26
The Feast of Christ the King

<u>Opening Prayer:</u>

Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in your well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (BCP 236)

Hebrews 11:17-40

By faith Abraham, [when] tried, offered up Isaac, and he who had received to himself the promises offered up his only begotten [son], as to whom it had been said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: counting that God [was] able to raise [him] even from among [the] dead, whence also he received him in a figure. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob [when] dying blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshipped on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph [when] dying called to mind the going forth of the sons of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones. By faith Moses, being born, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw the child beautiful; and they did not fear the injunction of the king. By faith Moses, when he had become great, refused to be called son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction along with the people of God than to have [the] temporary pleasure of sin; esteeming the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect to the recompense. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he persevered, as seeing him who is invisible. By faith he celebrated the passover and the sprinkling of the blood, that the destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them. By faith they passed through the Red sea as through dry land; of which the Egyptians having made trial were swallowed up. By faith the walls of Jericho fell, having been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with the unbelieving, having received the spies in peace. And what more do I say? For the time would fail me telling of Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthah, and David and Samuel, and of the prophets: who by faith overcame kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped lions' mouths, quenched [the] power of fire, escaped [the] edge of the sword, became strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, made [the] armies of strangers give way. Women received their dead again by resurrection; and others were tortured, not having accepted deliverance, that they might get a better resurrection; and others underwent trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, and of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, died by the death of the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, evil treated, (of whom the world was not worthy,) wandering in deserts and mountains, and [in] dens and caverns of the earth. And these all, having obtained witness through faith, did not receive the promise, God having foreseen some better thing for us, that they should not be made perfect without us.
--DARBY

…The upper world [of the saints in glory] is the very heart o Christ's kingdom—the sum total of all its increase. It is the end of the Christian's journey. All the increase of Christ's kingdom on earth goes to swell the population of heaven. It was what our text meant when it declared that "He must increase"—that earth should be overspread with the knowledge of the Savior, and heaven filled to overflowing with the yellow harvest of souls ripened for glory. The connection between the kingdom of Christ above and the kingdom of salvation below is of a most intimate kind. The minds that belong to the one belong also to the other. The prayer of the one turns into the praise of the other. The cross of the one is the crown of the other; and victory over the flesh, the world, and the devil is inscribed on all the banners of heaven.
—William Apess

Monday, November 27

Hebrews 12:1-17

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its

shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. "Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears. –(NIV) New International Version

Tuesday, November 28

Hebrews 12:18-29

You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear." But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire." –(TMSG) The Message

Wednesday, November 29

Hebrews 13:1-25

Continue to love each other with true Christian love. Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it! Don't forget about those in prison. Suffer with them as though you were there yourself. Share the sorrow of those being mistreated, as though you feel their pain in your own bodies.

Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery.

Stay away from the love of money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never forsake you." That is why we can say with confidence,

"The Lord is my helper, so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" Remember your leaders who first taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and trust the Lord as they do.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So do not be attracted by strange, new ideas. Your spiritual strength comes from God's special favor, not from ceremonial rules about food, which don't help those who follow them.

We have an altar from which the priests in the Temple on earth have no right to eat. Under the system of Jewish laws, the high priest brought the blood of animals into the Holy Place as a sacrifice for sin, but the bodies of the animals were burned outside the camp. So also Jesus suffered and died outside the city gates in order to make his people holy by shedding his own blood. So let us go out to him outside the camp and bear the disgrace he bore. For this world is not our home; we are looking forward to our city in heaven, which is yet to come.

With Jesus' help, let us continually offer our sacrifice of praise to God by proclaiming the glory of his name. Don't forget to do good and to share what you have with those in need, for such sacrifices are very pleasing to God.

Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they know they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this joyfully and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.

Pray for us, for our conscience is clear and we want to live honorably in everything we do. I especially need your prayers right now so that I can come back to you soon.

And now, may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, all that is pleasing to him. Jesus is the great Shepherd of the sheep by an everlasting covenant, signed with his blood. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

I urge you, dear brothers and sisters, please listen carefully to what I have said in this brief letter. I want you to know that our brother Timothy is now out of jail. If he comes here soon, I will bring him with me to see you.

Give my greetings to all your leaders and to the other believers there. The Christians from Italy send you their greetings. May God's grace be with you all. –(NLT) New Living Translation

Thursday, November 30

Mark 13:1-13

As he walked away from the Temple, one of his disciples said, "Teacher, look at that stonework! Those buildings!" Jesus said, "You're impressed by this grandiose architecture? There's not a stone in the whole works that is not going to end up in a heap of rubble." Later, as he was sitting on Mount Olives in full view of the Temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew got him off by himself and asked, "Tell us, when is this going to happen? What sign will we get that things are coming to a head?"

Jesus began, "Watch out for doomsday deceivers. Many leaders are going to show up with forged identities claiming, 'I'm the One.' They will deceive a lot of people. When you hear of wars and rumored wars, keep your head and don't panic. This is routine history, and no sign of the end. Nation will fight nation and ruler fight ruler, over and over. Earthquakes will occur in various places. There will be famines. But these things are nothing compared to what's coming.

"And watch out! They're going to drag you into court. And then it will go from bad to worse, dog-eat-dog, everyone at your throat because you carry my name. You're placed there as sentinels to truth. The Message has to be preached all across the world.

"When they bring you, betrayed, into court, don't worry about what you'll say. When the time comes, say what's on your heart—the Holy Spirit will make his witness in and through you. "It's going to be brother killing brother, father killing child, children killing parents. There's no telling who will hate you because of me. "Stay with it—that's what is required. Stay with it to the end. You won't be sorry; you'll be saved. –(TMSG) The Message

There will be—yea, there now is—a time of great sorrow and commotion upon the earth. Before Christ will take to himself the entire rule on earth, everything proud and haughty must be abased and brought low. The Savior will not permit of man-worship in his earthly kingdom. He must reign and be worshipped undivided and supreme. The haughty kings of the earth, the proud nobles, the oppressive and unjust governments, must all be dashed to pieces, or brought into a lamblike submission to Christ.
—William Apess

Friday, December 1

Mark 13:14-23

"But be ready to run for it when you see the monster of desecration set up where it should never be. You who can read, make sure you understand what I'm talking about. If you're living in Judea at the time, run for the hills; if you're working in the yard, don't go back to the house to get anything; if you're out in the field, don't go back to get your coat. Pregnant and nursing mothers will have it especially hard. Hope and pray this won't happen in the middle of winter.

"These are going to be hard days—nothing like it from the time God made the world right up to the present. And there'll be nothing like it again. If he let the days of trouble run their course, nobody would make it. But because of God's chosen people, those he personally chose, he has already intervened.

"If anyone tries to flag you down, calling out, 'Here's the Messiah!' or points, 'There he is!' don't fall for it. Fake Messiahs and lying preachers are going to pop up everywhere. Their impressive credentials and dazzling performances will pull the wool over the eyes of even those who ought to know better. So watch out. I've given you fair warning. –(TMSG) The Message

Saturday, December 2

Mark 13:24-37

"But in those days, following that distress, " 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.

"At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

"Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!' –(NIV) New International Version

(Advent Season begins)
Sunday, December 3
First Sunday of Advent